

# Decision Processes Colloquia

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**Monday, October 14, 2013**

**Where:** JMHH 255

**When:** 12:00 noon to 1:20 PM

## **Damon M. Centola**

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### **Social Science Online: Experimental Designs for Studying Norm Change**

*Abstract:* The remarkable volume of online data available, so called “big data”, has given rise to an expansive field of research on social dynamics on the Internet. However, one striking limitation of big data is that it is fundamentally observational, reintroducing many of the classic problems of causality and inference found in traditional social science data. To address these problems, we have pioneered the use of online tools that use social media to study the casual effects of social networks on the spread of behaviors. Our research investigates the impact of network “topology” – the graph-theoretic structure of social ties in a network – and “homophily” – the similarity or differences between connected members of a population – on the emergence of norms. Our results demonstrate how these factors can significantly, and causally, impact changes in behavior at both the individual and collective level.